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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted at Vista College to determine the educational and occupational goals of students enrolled in the Environmental Energy Technology Program. A seven-item survey was distributed in class over a five-semester period, soliciting information on academic and employment goals, current employment status, interest in networking with students and professionals in the field, and interest in a solar or conservation job training program. Study findings, based on responses from 88 students, included the following: (1) approximately 50% of the students indicated that they wished to achieve a degree or certificate; (2) 81% anticipated employment in the energy field or intended to apply what they learned to their current profession; (3) 26% wanted to pursue more education in the energy field; (4) 70% were not currently employed in the energy field; (5) over 90% were interested in networking with other students; and (6) 89% showed interest in a job training program. Responses from students who were surveyed more than once showed a consistency in goals over time. In response to the survey, the educational program was altered by faculty and administrators. An increase in achievement of student and institutional goals suggests that the survey is a low-cost tool for improving institutional effectiveness. The survey instrument is appended. (LAL)

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SURVEYING STUDENT GOALS TO AID INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Student Goals Survey Research Report

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STUDENT GOALS SURVEY

RESEARCH REPORT

SURVEYING STUDENT GOALS TO AID INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Abstract: A simple survey asking questions about educational and occupational goals was given to students in Community College classrooms. The resulting increase in the achievement of both the students' and the institution's goals suggest that it is a low cost tool for improving institutional effectiveness.

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A STUDY OF SURVEYING STUDENT GOALS TO AID INSTUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

This pilot study is in two parts. The first is a descriptive survey of a student population asking them to state their goals in a particular Community College occupational program. The second is an observation of the use of the survey information to affect the performance of the institution.

It was anticipated that the surveys would yield a descriptive numerical profile of student's goals within the discipline and changing trends in these goals.

The institution also has goals which, simply defined, are to graduate students with certificates or degrees reflecting a certain amount of training or education which prepares them for employment in a particular occupation. The trends inthese institutional goals can be measured and it was expected that comparisons could be drawn between students' statements of their goals and the institutions' providing opportunities for them to achieve those goals (institutional effectiveness).

These questions are part of the general development of a hypotheses that increased communication about the classroom goals of an educational institution can increase achievement of those goals by increased use of existing resources.

Previous research (Freeman, et al., Berkeley Unified School District Study, Working Papers Berkeley Creators AssociationEducational Foundation 1976, and Sonoma State University, Department of Education, 1978) indicates that changes in educational goal objectives achievement can be tracked by several observation methods including case histories and surveys and

the results tend to correlate with each other.

It was anticipated that although this study would not be a direct test of the hypothesis, it would shed some light on how to test it and if the results of the earlier study would be generally repeated.

Prior to this current study, an informal survey was used in the Environmental Energy Technology occupational program with a dramatic increase in graduates and job placement. An objective of this research is to test the replication and refinement of that process.

This project's period was short and the sample too small to develop reliable tests of statistical significance, or to identify and test a control group, however descriptive data was expected to be useful.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

California Community Colleges are experiencing a drop in enrollment. The Peralta District, of which Vista College is part, projected a 37% enrollment drop for the period of the study. At the same time, unemployment rates for young adults in the urban service area is as high as 50%. Therefore, instructional programs and services which improve effectiveness in occupational program areas are a high priority.

This study was designed to develop and test a relatively simple communication and planning tool of low cost which would have a high information yield. It was anticipated that such a method could fill some of the counseling and support services which have been reduced because of diminished budgets. There is a further need to have immediate reliable information about student trends in order to plan curriculum rather than relying solely on precedent or speculative hindsight.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A simple 7 question survey was administered during the first two class meetingsin most cases. One sample of students who had not re-enrolled were given a telephone survey with additional questions about goal changes. A very small sample was also surveyed at the end of the semester. The questions were both multiple choice and also required respondents to write answers.

The survey was developed by a degree candidate in conjunction with faculty in order to 1) identify other potential degree candidates and 2) to develop a general profile of student's career goals and/or other related interests, 3) to describe their employment status, and 4) to find their interest in "networking" (which was not further defined).

The survey was distrubuted in the classrooms of programs over 5 semesters. Faculty and staff were interviewed about survey usefulness. The information from the faculty provided a general description of institutional performance trends. Changing student trends were measured by either administering two sequential surveys or a second set of questions directly about changed goals.

The survey was given to the sample population available in the classroom. Pre study-period records were used in lieu of a control group.

The data were summarized by computing percentages by arithmetic mean. The analysis was not by statistical inference, but by comparative observation.

Research Group I consisted of all the surveys, including those submitted more than once by the same student. These were tabulated to provide a descriptive profile of the students' expectations of how

they would use the program. The two sub-populations which were surveyed more than once were tabulated for changes in their answers from one survey to the next. These changes were reviewed for directional trends and reported as Research Groups II and III. Some of the surveys also included questions about awareness and use of institutional resources.

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Description of Sample

Spring 1980 Student Survey: In 1980, 4 years before the survey discussed here, there was a survey administered which measured some of the same data.

At that time 34% of the students planned to continue studying for a degree or certificate, 78% wished to study in the discipline for occupational reasons, 52% hoped to gain skills to modify a building for themselves. 20% were working in an energy related field, 52% held professional or skilled trade jobs, 48% had worked for 10 or more years, and 53% responded to the survey.

Current Program: Environmental Energy Technology classes are held evenings and weekends on the University of California campus and throughout the University oriented city of Berkley. The average age of Vista College students is 41, with that of this sub-population somewhat younger.

The surveys were administered to about half of the students in the program over a period of five semesters.

During the period of the study, the number of graduates from the program increased from none to about a quarter of the continuing students who planned on graduation as their goal. In the first two years of the study all 13 of the advanced students who were available for employment were employed for some time in skilled positions in the energy field because of their participation in the Environmental Energy Technology program.

The program is one of the college's smaller degree disciplines with 50 to 100 students enrolled per semester. It has had only minimal institutional support since the college has been reduced by some 75% over six years.

The number of graduates . . . will remain stable for the year of this report and for the following year.

Though not formally surveyed, some of the personal goals which students have achieved through the program are; 2 who have become self-employed, 2 who have received their State Contractor's Li censes, 1 who will be taking his Architectural license examination in the near future, 2 students who have transferred to University of California Campuses in Energy Studies, 2 who have completed P.G. and E. training fellowships, 2 who have completed a home designed in the program, and 1 who has completed an energy conservation retrofit on her home.

Two vocational/job training courses have been added to the curriculum and a grant-funded research program has been initiated with student cooperation.

Descriptive Profiles and Summaries of Data:

Research Group I

N = 109 Surveys from 88 Respondents

Academic Goals: Approximately 50% if the students indicated that they looked to the program to achieve a degree or certificate. Of these, 50% wanted to earn a certificate and 50% were working towards a 2 year A.S. degree. The others had enrolled to gain general knowledge for personal or professional use.

Employment Goals: 81% of the surveys showed that the students anticipated employment in the energy field or intended to apply what they learned to their current profession. Of these, the largest number (38%) were planning to work in Design, Construction, and Installation, 12% had goals in Architecture or Design only. The remaining 50% were spread between general interests, energy consulting, research, sales, real estate, environmental law, conservation, and financing.

Other Goals: 35% of the students had goals as owner-builders, followed in number, by 26% who wanted to persue more education in the energy field. The remainder were interested in research, general information, teaching, agriculture, self sufficiency, and "contributing to the world".

Current Employment Status: 70% of the students who responded were not employed in the energy field. The remaining 36% now see their profession as energy related. Approximately 68% indicated that they were available for employment.

Networking: More than 90% of those surveyed evinced a definate interest in networking with other students.

Participation in Future Job Training Program: Some 89% showed interest, some with qualifications about the type and timing, in a job training program.

Research Group II

N = 27 surveys from 13 students. The total time spread for this sub-group was from 2 to 5 semesters, with the greatest number falling between 2 and 3 semesters. It contains 12 pairs of written surveys and one set of three surveys comprised of two written and one telephone interview. These surveys, unlike Research Group I of which they are a part, are reviewed here for goal related answers which changed or remained the same over time.

Academic Goals: 10, or 77% of the respondents recorded no change in their goals. Of the remaining 3, two upgraded their academic goals and one withdrew from the program.

Other Goals: 8 (80%) of the students' personal goals remained the same over the time tested. One showed an upgraded goal and one expressed the same goal as before, but with a more specific description.

Employment Goals: The employment goals of 33% of the students who responded to this question did not change. 60% either upgraded their goal or were able to describe their employment goals more specifically. One withdrew from the energy technology field for increased employment prospects in a related field.

Current Employment Status: There was no change over time recorded in this group.

Networking: Interest in networking remained stable for 12 of the 13 respondents. The one dropout showed reduced interest here.

Job Training Program: There was no change recorded over time in the interest expressed in job training.

District Resource Use: 5 would, or have, used other District resources, 2 did not intend to.

Research Group III

N = 14 surveys from 7 students. Research Group III includes 7 students who were surveyed twice. Their first survey was written in the classroom, the second was a telephone interview using the revised survey. Students who had taken recent classes, but had not pre-enrolled for the next semester were selected for telephone interviews. As in Research Group II, these surveys were tabulated to describe trends over time. The total time spread for Group III was between 3 and 4 semesters, peaking at 3 semesters.

Academic Goals: 5 (71%) of the seven respondents did not change their goal statements. 2 changed from planning on studying for a certificate to withdraw from the program.

Other Goals: There was no change reported in the Other Goals category.

Employment Goals: 5 of the seven recorded no change in their employment goals. 1 goal was upgraded and 1 left the energy field for more immediate employment prospects.

Current Employment Status: There were no employment status changes reported.

Networking: There was no change reported by the 3 who replied about networking.

Job Training: Only 2 of the sample group replied to the question on job training. 1 would participate and 1 would not.

District Resources: 4 out of 5 would use other district resources.

Reasons for Not Re-enrolling: 6 out of the seven interviewed did not

re-enroll. They cited as reasons, a change in their field of work (2), the loss of financial aid (2), achieving their employment goal (1), and moving out of the area (1).

Conclusions from Descriptive Profiles: Overall, the students surveyed in the Environmental Energy Technology Program have exhibited a consistent and increasing occupational and academic interest to spite increased technology, a demanding job market, and dramatically shrinking instutional resources. The persistence evident in the responses to the questionnaires indicates a mature and motivated population of students who continue with the program.

The population surveyed showed a high degree of stability in their stated goal objectives. This would be expected with the median age over 30. Students are evenly divided among those who look to Vista to gain an academic certificate or degree and those who enroll for personal or professional reasons, but are not studying for a degree.

Those citing a goal of an A.S. degree and tbose intereated in a certificate of completion are evenly divided with a small trend towards upgrading from a certificate to a degree for those who remained in the program. There are, however, more than twice as many certificates actually awarded because the requirements are satisfied earlier in the process of of studying for the degree, and there seems to be a higher rate of retention for those who have originally chosen the technical certificate as their goal. The percentage of students expecting a degree or certificate increased significantly since the survey taken at the inception of the program five years earlier.

The degree of interest in occupational use of the program is a primary goal of most students. The percentage of students who anticipate

entering the energy field or upgrading their current professional position has remained consistently high. Over time, students show an increased interest in and understanding of the occupational opportunities as evidenced by the majority either upgrading or more clearly specifying their employment goals from one survey to the next.

Half of the students are planning to work in some combination of Design, Construction, and Installation of energy conserving devices or buildings. The rest expressed diverse interests including research and sales.

Students' other major interests were as owner-builders and in persuing further education in the energy field. About a third had diverse related interests including Third World agriculture and local self-sufficiency.

Since 1980, owner-builder interests seem to have declined somewhat to be replaced by academic interests. This also follows State policy which, by altering the course selection offered, also may alter the type of students who enroll.

The majority of students have not been employed in the energy conservation field, though the number who are has increased somewhat. This suggests a trend towards professional or skilled trade expertise which correlates with the academic tendancy in the same direction.

Most of those surveyed were consistently eager to change to energy related jobs, and continue to learn in occupational settings as shown by a high availability for employment in the field and an almost total and unchanging interest in future networking and participation in job training programs.

Those who did not re-enroll cited primarily economic or employment reasons, with some who achieved their goals and withdrew. Although not

covered specifically in the questionnaire, it may be that the "change of employment" goals written in were by those who were exploring the field and decided not to persue it.

Faculty and administrative interviews indicated that students became aware of resources from the survey and from classroom discussions about survey questions. Graduation information was compiled and distributed to students because of survey information. The curriculum was altered to meet the needs expressed by degree candidates, and retention amongst those close to graduation was 100% throughout the final courses. Overall retention was also higher than the College average, but this comparison is unreliable because of uneven methods of reporting.

The survey, without computer aid, takes about two hours additional time per class to collate and communicate the data. If the survey were written with less redundancy and questions which were slightly less ambiguous, if it were administered mid-semester rather than at the beginning, and were tabulated by computer it should improve the reliability and frequency of the information.

Further research would be required to study the causal relationship if any, between various types of communication and program effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Since 1) the results of an initial informal survey were replicated with the test survey, and 2) the method was low cost, and 3) the educational program was altered by faculty and administrators in response to survey results, and 4) there was a significant increase of both student and instutional goals stated and then achieved, it can be concluded that the use of a simple survey of student goals which is given in the classroom can increase and maintain institutional effectiveness by providing appropriate resources which the students use to achieve their goals.

Because the survey is simple and asks general goal-orientation questions, it lends itself to use by other disciplines and colleges. On a college-wide scale, with appropriate modifications, data gathered by means of the survey would provide a numerical description of the student population. If the survey were administered mid-semester, it would add in-progress data to the registration and grade information now collected only at the beginning or end of each semester.

Curriculum development is done by faculty or administrators based on catalogue guidelines and predictions of needs. Reliable information on goals and their follow-through can eliminate some of the speculation in budget and curriculum planning by keeping track of trends as they are reported. Otherwise they have to be guessed at or analyzed after the fact of enrollment changes. Introducing this type of survey of goals also alerts students to resources mentioned in the survey, and causes them to project and re-evaluate their goals.

Although it appears from this study that communication of goals may create an environment which encourages an increase in institutional effectiveness, further study would be needed to isolate any causal

relationship. Student goal achievement and measurable institutional effectiveness both increased significantly concurrently with the use of this survey. Its use was cited repeatedly as a cause for the increase, however other factors such as initiative on the part of the students and faculty were not measured. Though the use of such a survey alone cannot guarantee an increase in institutional performance, it appears to be a cost effective tool which will increase the probability of both the institution and the students achieving their goals.

ENERGY TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

NAME: *SAMPLE SURVEY AND TOTALS*

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR GOAL IN THE VISTA COLLEGE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES PROGRAM.

1) *24* A.S. DEGREE ___ SOLAR
WITH A OPTION,
24 CERTIFICATE ___ CONSERVATION
54 TOTAL (6 unspecified)

WORK TO BE COMPLETED _____ SEMESTER, 19____.

2) OTHER GOAL OR INTEREST (OWNER-BUILDER, ETC.) _____

_____

WHAT IS YOUR EMPLOYMENT GOAL IN THE ENERGY FIELD?

ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE ENERGY FIELD OR IN A RELATED AREA?

YES: *30*

NO: *54*

ARE YOU AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT NOW?

YES: *36*

NO: *17*

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN NETWORKING WITH OTHER ENERGY TECH. STUDENTS AND WITH PEOPLE WORKING IN THE ENERGY FIELD?

YES: *96*

NO: *7*

WOULD YOU PARTIPATE IN A SOLAR OR CONSERVATION JOB TRAINING PROGRAM, IF AVAILABLE?

YES: *91*

NO: *11*

Note: Differences between total N and subtotals are due to unanswered questions on the surveys.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
MAY 15 1986